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# Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /082 W
----------086852 270020Z /62
R 262122Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5817

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 6113

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, SHUM, PDIP, ASEC
SUBJ: GOC AND CRITICS MANEUVER ON MISSING PERSONS PROBLEM

1. POLITICALLY AWARE CRITICS OF THE GOC RECOGNIZE THE SLIM GAINS WRUNG FROM THE MID-JUNE ECLA HUNGER STRIKE (SANTIAGO-5066). TO KEEP THE HEAT ON PRESIDENT PINOCHET, ON JULY 20 THE COORDINATING GROUP OF RELATIVES OF THE "DISAPPEARED" SENT A PETITION TO HIM (AND SIMULTANEOUSLY TO OTHER MILITARY OFFICERS AND THE PUBLIC) PRESSING HIM TO MAKE GOOD ON REPEATED GOC PROMISES TO CONDUCT INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE FATE OF THE DISAPPEARED AND MAKE PUBLIC THE FINDINGS. PRESS COVERAGE WAS MINIMAL, BUT AT LEAST TWO LOCAL RADIO STATIONS KNOWN TO REFLECT CATHOLIC CHURCH POLICY (COOPERATIVA AND SANTIAGO) READ THE PETITION ON THE AIR.

2. NEXT DAY THE GOC LASHED OUT WITH AN OFFICIAL ANNOUNCE-MENT, REMINDING MEDIA OF THE NEED FOR "RESPONSIBLE" REPORTING. IT STATED THAT NOT ONLY HAD RADIOS COOPERATIVA AND SANTIAGO MISINFORMED THE POPULACE, THEY WERE ACTING "INDETRIMENT TO THE SUPERIOR INTERESTS OF THE NATION." THE STATEMENT POINTEDLY EQUATED THE STATIONS' ACTIONS WITH THE BEHAVIOR OF NOW PERMANENTLY CLOSED RADIO BALMACEDA AND ATTRIBUTED THE PETITION TO "THOSE WHO SOUGHT TO OVERTHROW THE GOVERNMENT," ABETTED BY THE VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY. RADIO COOPERATIVA
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COUNTERED THESE ALLEGATIONS JULY 22.

3. CLEARLY REFERRING TO THE TODMAN TRIP, THE GOC ANNOUNCE-MENT ALSO ASSERTED THAT OPPONENTS ALWAYS SEEK PUBLICITY WHEN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ARE BEING HELD OR WHEN "VISITS OF INTERNATIONAL PERSONALITIES OR REPRESENTATIVES OF FRIENDLY COUNTRIES" ARE ANNOUNCED.

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4. COMMENT: THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HUNDREDS OF POLITICALLY ACTIVE PEOPLE DURING THE FIRST THREE YEARS OF ITS RULE HAS BECOME ITS MOST INTRACTABLE PROBLEM. THE MOTIVES OF THOSE WHO WILL NOT LET THE GOC FORGET THE "DISAPPEAREDS" VARY: MANY ARE DISTRAUGHT RELATIVES ANGUISHING OVER THE FATE OF THEIR MISSING; OTHER, WITHIN THE RELATIVES' ORGANIZATION AND OUTSIDE IT, HAVE LESS INNOCENT REASONS FOR KEEPING THE POT BOILING (SEE SANTIAGO 0831).

5. THE GOC MAY BE PINNING A BUM RAP ON THE FAMILIES, THE CHURCH AND RADIO STATIONS THIS TIME. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MISSING PERSONS GROUP HAD TOLD EMBOFF A WEEK EARLIER THAT THE PETITION WAS IN PREPARATION; THE RADIO STATIONS, NO FANS OF THE GOC, WOULD HAVE ACTED AS THEY DID WITHOUT REGARD TO THE TODMAN TRIP. NEVERTHELESS, THE GOC, BY LINKING THIS PETITION TO THE TODMAN VISIT, HOPES TO DISCREDIT ITS CRITICS.
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**Review Markings:**
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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009